House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Thursday, October 6, 2005, at 10 a.m.

Senate

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2005

The Senate met at 10:01 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable DAVID VITTER, a Senator from the State of Louisiana.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal and ever blessed God, help us to walk in Your steps. Show us the path of humility so that we will seek to serve others. Show us the path of forgiveness so that we will give others the same kind of mercy we so frequently receive from You. Show us the path of courage so that we can choose the challenging and narrow way that leads to life. Show us the path of endurance so that we will not become discouraged in doing well. Show us the path of loyalty so that nothing can tempt us to disappoint You.

Bless the Members of this body as they strive to walk in a way that will honor You. As they seek Your wisdom, guide them by the power of Your loving providence.

We pray in Your sovereign Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable DAVID VITTER led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, October 5, 2005.
To the Senate:
Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable DAVID VITTER, a Senator from the State of Louisiana, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Mr. VITTER thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

Mr. McCAIN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. FRIST. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, shortly we will resume debate on the Defense appropriations bill. We began consideration on that bill last Thursday. Since that time, Members have had Thursday night, Friday, and all day Monday. We were here all day Monday, all day yesterday, Tuesday, to offer amendments. We will continue with the amendment process through today.
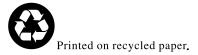
As I have announced previously, we will stack votes beginning at sometime around 7:30 this evening to accommodate observance of the Jewish holiday. As I have said from the outset, our intentions are we will finish the Department of Defense appropriations bill this week prior to going out on our week-long recess. It is a critically important bill, something we will finish this week.

Last night, I did file cloture on the bill. I filed in order to ensure we finish the bill this week in an orderly way. Everyone has had the opportunity for the last 3 or 4 days to come forward and offer amendments. We will vote on those amendments tonight, and then we would have the cloture vote tomorrow morning.

Again, I encourage, as I have every day for the last several days, Members to come to the Senate and offer those amendments so we can vote on them. We have had more than 100 amendments filed. It is imperative that the Senators who are serious about their amendments and want them considered come forward and work with the managers over the course of this morning and not wait until tonight. We will finish the bill this week.

As a reminder, we will recess from 12:30 until 2:15 for the weekly party luncheons.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Let me turn to the Democratic leader on anything on the schedule before I make a very brief statement.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

AMBASSADOR NEGROPONTE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, my staff received a telephone call this morning, less than an hour ago, indicating Ambassador Negroponte would not be coming today because the leader or his people indicated he shouldn't come.

We have these very important elections taking place in Iraq on October 15. This is an opportunity for Members to visit with Ambassador Negroponte, who is, if not the expert on what is going on in Iraq, certainly one of the two or three top people in the world to tell Members what is going on there. This briefing is open to all Senators, Democrats and Republicans. There certainly is no reason we should not be able to do that. It is an important oversight responsibility we have.

I hope the distinguished Republican leader has not been part of telling Negroponte and his people not to come up here for that briefing at 3 to 4 o'clock. I had a meeting this morning at 9 o'clock. I invited all Senators to come who were with me. We are going to have good attendance at that meeting. This is not a meeting in any way to do with anything other than find out what is going on. We have a responsibility to find out what is going on. I would like to have the Ambassador come often. I don't know why we can't go ahead with this briefing.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, with regard to a briefing which was initiated on a partisan basis by the other side of the aisle in spite of their knowledge that we do have an all-Senate briefing that is bipartisan in the tradition—we have had over 20 different briefings, including one very useful one last week, one the week prior to that. On a partisan basis, an all-Senate briefing was scheduled; a counteroffer was made. We already have a meeting scheduled with the Ambassador here in 2 to 3 weeks.

I will continue to work with the Democratic leader coming back and forth. These all-Senator briefings we have, which are on a classified basis, have proven to be a very useful vehicle for all Senators to participate, to be able to ask questions of various representatives, and is a very good model.

I will continue to work with the Democratic leader. As he knows, Ambassador Negroponte is coming in about 2½ or 3 weeks—I don't know exactly what that date is for that particular all-Senate briefing initiated on a bipartisan basis and not on a partisan basis, which this last meeting was.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I know the distinguished Republican leader has a statement to make, but just on this subject, on a more personal basis, the Republican leader and I had a number of meetings the last several weeks, certainly the last few days, and this issue has never been raised.

I don't see how we can have too many briefings on what is going on in Iraq. Negroponte has simply not been here. I have the greatest respect for him, but in a briefing—in 2 or 3 weeks, the elections will have been over in Iraq. That is one of the reasons people are losing faith in what is going on in Iraq—because we do not have the information to convey to the people. The administration says just stay the course. We want information.

Negroponte, if he is told by the Republican leader not to come, he is not going to come. It is too bad. It is a perfect day for this. The Jewish holiday is still on. Most Members would have the opportunity to come here. Senator LIEBERMAN and a couple of others would not be able to, but we already have on my side about 20 Senators willing and wanting to come.

I am disappointed this will now have to become a political issue. It shouldn't. I like Negroponte. He is good. He is good for the country. I told the President personally that this was a great choice he made to lead this new intelligence agency.

There is no need to belabor the point other than to say I am terribly disappointed that my Senators—and anyone else on the other side of the aisle—want to come and listen to a presentation prior to the elections and now are going to be unable to have this briefing. That is too bad.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I am a bit offended when the Democratic leader knows last week we had defense, we had Generals Myers, Abizaid, and Casey brief Members extensively in a bipartisan way in a tradition we have set up that is working very well. We have the Secretary of State, which he knows, coming on October 19 to have a very similar briefing, addressing issues in Iraq, in Afghanistan. And Negroponte is coming, as I said, the following week.

So we will work together. I do want to make it clear their invitation was initiated in a partisan way, with a letter I was not a part of, not asked to be a part of, in the letter itself, the initial letter. I think we need to continue to work together to continue these briefings, which are very important, as we go forward.

ROSH HASHANAH

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I would like to comment on the Jewish holiday at this juncture, if I might.

I would like to take a moment to recognize the Jewish holiday of Rosh Hashanah and to reflect on the importance of Israel to the Jewish people and the United States.

Rosh Hashanah, also called the Jewish New Year, began Monday evening. Jews all across the globe flocked to their synagogues, prepared ceremonial meals, and set aside special time with family to mark the occasion.

Rosh Hashanah celebrates the anniversary of the creation of the world. It is a time for contemplation and prayer, a day to look forward to the year ahead, to reflect on past deeds, and to ask for God's forgiveness.

Rosh Hashanah is followed by Yom Kippur, the most solemn occasion on the Jewish calendar. Beginning on the 10th day of Tishri—the evening of October 12—the Jewish people will observe a day of fasting, of prayer, and reflection. And as with every year, they will end the annual rite with the words: "Next Year in Jerusalem."

Israel, and the city of Jerusalem, a city that both major parties recognize as its capital, is the birthplace to three of the world's great religions. It is rich in tradition, history, and culture, all of which truly touches the soul.

From the mountains of the Golan to the port of Eilat, Israel's natural beauty is as diverse as the religions that share its golden city of Jerusalem.

A land of economic and scientific innovation, the mysticism of the past unites with technology of the future.

Perhaps most significantly, Israel is a symbol of the survival of the Jewish people. It shines as a beacon of hope to Jews all over the world, even as it stands surrounded by a sea of tyrannies.

And to the United States, this small and besieged country is a vital partner in the war on terror. The struggle it fights every day against terrorist forces, within and without its borders, is part of the same struggle our troops fight every day in Iraq and Afghanistan—the same struggle that rocked the island of Bali on Saturday.

Reasonable people can and should debate Israel's policies. Serious, thoughtful debate is crucial to devising effective and correct solutions. It is the cornerstone of democracy.

But we must always distinguish between those who raise legitimate questions about the specific policies of a democratic state and those who use criticism of Israel as a disguise for attacks on the Jewish people.

I urge all of my colleagues to reflect on the longstanding relationship, friendship, between the United States and Israel; to wish our ally peace and prosperity in the year ahead; and to work to strengthen, deepen, and improve our bond as defenders of freedom.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

RETIREMENT OF TIMOTHY SCOTT WINEMAN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Timothy Wineman has worked for the Senate for 35 years. On September 28, the Senate noted the outstanding service of Tim by adopting S. Res. 258.